DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 390 283 FL 023 484

AUTHOR	Dame, Melvina Azar
TITLE	Serving Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students: Strategies for the School Librarian. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-FL-96-03
PUB DATE	Nov 95
CONTRACT	RR93002010
NOTE	4p.
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC/CLL, 1118 22nd Street N.W., Washington, DC 20037.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; *English (Second Language); *Librarians; Library Collections; *Library Role; Literacy; Multicultural Education; School Community Relationship; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; Spanish Speaking
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

this digest discusses ways that the school librarian in one high school fostered a positive environment in the school library for English-as-a-Second-Language students and broadened the role of the school library in effecting literacy experiences for these students. The digest addresses how one school librarian made the library a welcoming place for ESL students, the establishment of a collection materials for these students, library resources available for both ESL and content teachers, library collaboration with agencies outside of the school, multicultural activities, and a literacy activity for native Spanish speaking students learning English and native-English speaking students learning Spanish. (Contains five references.) (JL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 390 283

ERIC Digest

Serving Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students: Strategies for the School Librarian

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FL023484

ERIC® CLEARINGHOUSE ON LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Digest

November 1995

(EDO-FL-96-03)

Serving Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students: Strategies for the School Librarian

Melvina Azar Dame, Central Falls School System (RI) and Community College of Rhode Island

The promotion of literacy is the most essential element in the design of school library services to a linguistically and culturally diverse student population. Librarians are faced with the challenge of linking students from widely varying backgrounds to information sources and drawing them into patterns of regular library use. By creating a positive climate, the school library can provide English as a second language (ESL) students with a place for learning, sharing, and personal growth. This digest discusses ways the librarian in one high school fostered a positive environment in the school library for ESL students and broadened the role of the school library in effecting literacy experiences for these students.

A Welcoming Place

To lessen fear of the unfamiliar, ESL students were introduced to the library at a time when no other classes were there. Each student was given a diagram of the library, then walked through each area beginning at the entrance. Hands-on activities were provided, such as practice in using the copy machine. Thereafter, students returned to the library on an individual basis, or in pairs, with a specific request to the librarian; at this time, individual explanations and demonstrations were given of the various areas and their uses. Eventually, students were sent to the librarian with individual assignments. By this time, students were familiar with the library staff and did not hesitate to approach them for help. Students were encouraged to use the library before school, after school, and during study hall periods. As a result, the ESL students found the library to be a safe and welcoming place and became frequent users.

The Collection

To draw ESL students into a pattern of regular library use, the library established a collection of reading materials in their first languages. To meet the full range of interests and reading abilities, collections of fiction and non-fiction books in Spanish, Arabic, and Portuguese were borrowed for extended periods through Interlibrary Loan. With school library funds, a small collection of Portuguese books, a weekly Portuguese newspaper, a Spanish newspaper, and foreign language dictionaries were purchased. Spanish magazines were contributed by the Spanish language teacher.

High-interest, low-reading-level paperbacks in English were borrowed from a local public library's literacy collection. At the request of the ESL teacher, these books were housed in the ESL classroom for easy access during classroom times. A listening station with a cassette player and headphone and a collection of read-along books in English were made available in the library conference room. Most books were classics that are required reading for high school students. In addition, a collection of wordless books was borrowed from several public libraries. Many elementary school ESL teachers report multiple uses of these books, including promotion of oral language and conversation skills, development of sequence and prediction skills, and development of vocabulary skills.

Resources for Teachers

For all students, but especially for ESL students, the optimal learning process involves connecting new ideas with old knowledge. To provide materials required for this, the librarian introduced the use of advanced organizers, an essential instructional strategy proposed by Ausubel (1960) to enhance classroom learning. Ausubel maintained that the information-processing system of humans is a set of ideas that provides anchors for new information or ideas, that in turn provides a storehouse when new meanings are acquired. Central to enhancing the learning process for students with language needs is the technique of building learning upon prior learning and knowledge. Based on this view of how learners process information, and the realization that much of the material to be learned by ESL students is completely new and unrelated to anything they know, the librarian created opportunities for ESL students to gain essential prior knowledge through the use of advance organizers. Collaboration between the librarian and the ESL teacher resulted in a list of key themes and subject areas related to the ESL text and curriculum. Appropriate materials were acquired, borrowed, and collected by the librarian for use in both the media center and in the ESL classroom. Because this strategy relies heavily on visuals and pictorial materials, a picture file was developed for advance organizers. To collect materials suitable for use as advance organizers, the librarian used references for collecting visuals with pictures of all kinds, especially designed for second language learners (Maley, Duff, & Grellet, 1981), a directory of resource organizations (Joramo, 1979), and various bibliographies (Dame, 1993).

Collaboration with Other Agencies

The school library organized a program with speakers on occupations, career choices, and vocational and education options for the ESL students through the local community college. Representing the college were an admissions officer, a Spanish-speaking counselor from Access to Opportunity (a counseling and mentor program for ESL, at-risk, low-income, and disadvantaged students), and a Spanish-speaking counselor from the Education Opportunity Center (a pre-admission center for ESL students needing counseling in language competency, financial aid, admission requirements, GED information, etc.). The program was held in Spanish and English in the school library with an interpreter for the Portuguese students. Follow-up appointments were made and the counselor from the

CAL Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street NW, Washington, DC 20037 (202) 429-9292

Educational Opportunity Center returned weekly to the school library for individual counseling.

Multicultural Activities

The school library has a unique role in the integration of cultural differences within the school community. Because library services are essential to all segments of the school population and school activities, the librarian holds a strategic position as an integrator, coordinator, negotiator, unifier, and equalizer.

While a class of English-speaking students was researching Christmas customs around the world, the ESL class was researching Christmas traditions in the United States. The librarian offered to co-ordinate an intercultural program between the two classes to exchange Christmas customs and traditions.

When the ESL students were researching the history and foods of Thanksgiving, the librarian proposed the preparation of a Thanksgiving dinner. Ultimately, the ESL teacher had a Thanksgiving dinner brought into her class for her students. Among the numerous resources and bibliographies available on the subject of multicultural materials, Miller-Lachmann (1992) and Dame (1993) are suggested as a starting point.

Literacy Activity

One literacy activity took shape when the school librarian observed that senior students were assigned to the high school library for Spanish IV Independent Study. It seemed that there were opportunities for these students to improve their Spanish literacy if Spanish-speaking students could be in the library at the same time. This would help the Spanish-speaking students improve their English literacy skills and would help to promote multicultural understanding. By consulting with the ESL teacher, Spanish-speaking ESL students were identified and an examination of their schedules showed that some of them could be scheduled into the library for the same period as the Spanish IV students. Alliances were formed with the Spanish and ESL teachers, and two student literacy groups were formed. Students were informed by the teachers of the purpose of the groups, and that they would be graded by the librarian for effort and participation. Spanish/English dictionaries were available at each meeting.

Initial sessions were centered around oral communication in Spanish and English. Because the students were strangers to each other, the flow of conversation of these early sessions was directed by the librarian. In the beginning, there were periods of silence. However, as the meetings progressed, barriers were overcome and the project took on a life of its own. Conversation became natural and comfortable. Students began requesting a non-directed format of conversation. Spanish was spoken during half of the period, and English was spoken during the other half. At times, conversations and discussions would alternate between Spanish-speaking students speaking in English, while English-speaking students responded in Spanish. At other times, the order would be reversed.

Culture-specific dialogues were created. For example, when teenage culture in Mexico and the United States was explored, recognition of similarities and differences clarified false assumptions and generalizations. As English-speaking students sought knowledge and information about the social, cultural, economic, and political issues of Mexico, the Spanish-speaking students became information givers, thus gaining a new status.

Following the oral communicative stage, the group moved on to reading in both Spanish and English. Following the reading of each article, students translated the article in their own words, then each student provided an individual interpretation of the article in English and Spanish.

The writing segment of this literacy activity began with students agreeing to be ethnographers by observing what was happening in and outside of class, at school functions, and in interactions between ESL students and native-English-speaking students. Students agreed to keep a journal to record their observations of differences and to reflect on whether these differences were cultural. This served as a springboard to multicultural understanding.

Finally, journal writing was introduced between students in both languages. Through journal writing, a sense of developing friendships was observed. Noticeable, also, was the interaction of these students as they met between classes and in the hallways.

Although initiated as a literacy activity, these group meetings also produced a greater appreciation and understanding of cultural diversity, empowered students, and provided an opportunity for friendships to form. The English-speaking students began to acknowledge the expertise of the Spanish-speaking students and sought help from them more often than from the dictionary. In turn, the Spanish-speaking students developed new friends and were empowered by their new helping role.

Conclusion

The development of skills in using the library and its resources is an essential part of learning English. Non-native English speakers may have an even greater need for library skills than native speakers. Although they may not have achieved the English proficiency necessary for expressing their learning needs, they may need information that native speakers take for granted. ESL students must be given the tools that will enable them to succeed in the American education system (Dame, 1993). The activities described here were implemented with the hope that through access to information and knowledge, ESL students can become equal participants in society.

References

Ausubel, D.P. (1960). The use of advance organizers in the learning and retention of meaningful verbal material. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 51*, 267-272.

Dame, M.A. (1993). *Serving linguistically and culturally diverse students: Strategies for the school library media specialist*. New York: Neal-Schuman.

Joramo, M.K. (1979). *Directory of ethnic publishers and resource organizations*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Maley, A., Duff, A., & Grellet, F. (1981). *The mind's eye: Using pictures creatively in language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Miller-Lachmann, L. (1992). *Our family, our friends, our world: An annotated guide to significant multicultural books for children and teenagers*. New Jersey: R.R. Bowker.

This report was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Dept. of Education, under contract no. RR93002010. The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of OERI or ED.